

Message Text

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SUBJECT:PRESS ITEM ON U.S.-GREEK RELATIONS

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF APRIL 26 WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE BY
MICHAEL GETLER, ENTITLED "SHIFT ON TURKISH ARMS BAN SOURS
U.S.-GREEK RELATIONS".

BEGIN QUOTE: ATHENS - EIGHTEEN MONTH AGO, JIMMY CARTER'S
ELECTION TO THE PRESIDENCY WAS GREETED BY THE RINGING OF
CHURCH BELLS THROUGHOUT GREECE.

TODAY, CARTER ADMINISTRATION POLICIES HAVE BADLY SOURED
GREEK-AMERICAN RELATIONS. THE CAUSE OF WIDESPREAD DISEN-
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CHANTMENT WITH CARTER IS HIS EFFORT TO LIFT THE CONGRESSION-
AL ARMS EMBARGO AGAINST TURKEY -- AN EMBARGO HE HAD ENDORSED
AS A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S SHIFT ALSO CONTRIBUTED, AT LEAST IN THE
EYES OF TOP GREEK OFFICIALS, TO AN IMAGE OF WHITE HOUSE
"WEAKNESS."

IN THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION'S VIEW, THE THREE-YEAR-OLD EMBARGO HAS PROVED TO BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. IT HAS FAILED TO FORCE TURKEY INTO MAJOR CONCESSIONS TOWARD SETTLING THE BITTER AND LINGERING DISPUTE WITH GREECE OVER THE ISLAND OF

CYPRUS AND IN THE MEANWHILE IT HAS MILITARILY AND ECONOMICALLY WEAKENED AN IMPORTANT ALLY ALONG NATO'S SOUTHERN FLANK.

BUT TO GREEK DEFENSE MINISTER EVANGELOS AVEROFF THE IDEA OF NOT WAITING "AT LEAST FOR REASONABLE TURKISH PROPOSALS" ON CYPRUS "BEFORE MAKING SUCH A BIG AND IMPORTANT DECISION.. WITHOUT ASKING ANYTHING IN EXCHANGE OR SECURING PROGRESS, EVEN A SMALL AMOUNT...IS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS."

AVEROFF, 68, IS A MAJOR POLITICAL FIGURE HERE AND TRADITIONALLY PRO-AMERICAN. HE IS A FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER, A CLOSE ADVISER AND CONFIDANT OF GREEK PREMIER CONSTANTINE KARAMANLIS, AND ONE OF THREE POSSIBLE HEIRS TO KARAMANLIS.

IN AN INTERVIEW IN HIS SPACIOUS OFFICE IN WHAT THE GREEKS ALSO CALL THEIR "PENTAGON," THE DEFENSE MINISTER SAID THE WHITE HOUSE PROPOSAL EARLIER THIS MONTH FOR LIFTING THE ARMS EMBARGO HAS DEFINITELY HAD AN UNFAVORABLE IMPACT ON GREEK PUBLIC OPINION."

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AVEROFF SAID "UNHAPPILY," THIS MIGHT BE "THE LOWEST POINT EVER FOR GREEK-AMERICAN RELATIONS, THOUGH I THINK THE GREAT MAJORITY OF GREEKS KNOW WHAT THEY OWE TO THE U.S."

MAYBE, AVEROFF ADDED, THERE WAS A PERIOD OF EVEN WORSE RELATIONS, DIRECTED MOSTLY AT FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER, DURING THE SECOND TURKISH INVASION OF CYPRUS IN 1974.

NEVERTHELESS, HE SAID, TODAY "IS CERTAINLY ONE OF THE LOWEST MOMENTS. MAINLY IT'S PUBLIC OPINION. BUT IN GOVERNMENT, WE'RE NOT TOO HAPPY EITHER."

THE EMBARGO WAS PLACED ON TURKEY AFTER ITS FORCES, USING AMERICAN WEAPONS, CARRIED OUT TWO INVASIONS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN ISLAND AND OCCUPIED ROUGHLY 38 PERCENT OF THE LAND IN A STATE WHERE THE TURKISH POPULATION NUMBERS ONLY ABOUT 18 PERCENT. THE REST IS GREEK.

AVEROFF ACKNOWLEDGED UNDER QUESTIONING, THAT THE GREEKS THEMSELVES "BEAR A RESPONSIBILITY" FOR THE CYPRUS MESS "BECAUSE OF THE UNBELIEVABLE AND IMMORAL ACTION OF THE GREEK

COLONELS" IN OVERTHROWING THE CYPRIOT GOVERNMENT OF ARCH-BISHOP MAKARIOS. IT WAS THIS THAT TRIGGERED THE TURKISH INVASION IN JULY 1974 IN THE NAME OF PROTECTING TURKISH CYPRIOTS.

"BUT THAT DOES NOT JUSTIFY THE SECOND TURKISH ATTACK A

MONTH LATER," AVEROFF SAID, WHICH TOOK PLACE IN THE MIDST OF NEGOTIATIONS TO SETTLE THE SMOLDERING CRISIS. THEN, TURKEY SOLIDIFIED ITS CONTROL OVER THE PORTION OF THE ISLAND IT HELD AND "TRANSFORMED NEARLY 200,000 PEACEFUL GREEKS WHO HAD BEEN LIVING THERE FOR 2,000 YEARS INTO REFUGEES," HE SAID.

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FOUR YEARS LATER, THE SITUATION ON CYPRUS REMAINS LARGELY UNCHANGED.

IN A VIEW THE WHITE HOUSE NOW SEEMS TO ACCEPT, TURKISH PREMIER BULENT ECEVIT HAS ARGUED THAT NO TURKISH LEADER CAN BE SEEN AS MAKING CONCESSIONS UNDER U.S. PRESSURE AND EXPECT TO SURVIVE IN OFFICE. AFTER THE ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCED ITS SWITCH AND SUPPORTED LIFTING THE EMBARGO, ECEVIT FOLLOWED WITH PROPOSALS FOR THE TROUBLED ISLAND.

THESE PROPOSALS, HOWEVER, APPEAR TO OFFER ONLY TINY TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS, WHILE DEMANDING EQUAL POLITICAL RIGHTS. THEY ALREADY HAVE BEEN SHARPLY REJECTED BY THE GREEK CYPRIOT LEADERS AS TANTAMOUNT TO "COMMITTING SUICIDE."

NEVERTHELESS, THE PROPOSALS ARE THE FIRST TO EVEN OPEN THE TERRITORIAL QUESTION AND THEIR SUBMISSION TO U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL KURT WALDHEIM HAS ESTABLISHED AT LEAST A POTENTIAL FORMAT FOR GETTING THE INTERCOMMUNAL TALKS ON CYPRUS STARTED AGAIN. WALDHEIM HAS SAID HE WOULD DECIDE SOON IF THE TURKISH SUBMISSION WAS SUFFICIENT TO START NEGOTIATIONS. IN THAT CASE, SOME DIPLOMATS HERE EXPECT TURKEY MAY BE MORE FORTHCOMING.

FOR THE MOMENT, AVEROFF EXPRESSES A WIDELY FELT DESPAIR HERE.

"TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THE STATE OF MIND OF THE TURKS TODAY, I REALLY CAN'T SEE WHAT KIND OF A SETTLEMENT COULD BE REACHED," HE SAID. "THE GREEK CYPRIOTS ARE NOT DISPOSED TO ACCEPT ANYTHING EVEN APPROACHING THE ACTUAL TURKISH PROPOSALS," WHICH AMOUNT TO A RETURN OF ABOUT 1 PERCENT OF THE CAPTURED LAND.

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"THE POSITIONS ARE SO FAR APART THAT I CAN'T SEE HOW A SOLUTION COULD BE REACHED. I'M AFRAID WE SHALL LIVE A LONG TIME UNDER THE PRESENT CONDITIONS," HE SAID.

A SOLUTION, HE SAID, SHOULD IN THEORY "BE SIMPLE BECAUSE IT SHOULD BE A MATTER OF THE TURKS KEEPING A PART OF THE LAND THAT IS REASONABLY CLOSE TO THEIR PORTION OF THE POPU-

LATION, WHICH IS ABSOLUTELY MORAL, AND OF HAVING A CONSTITUTION FOR A STATE WHICH NOW HAS A SMALL MINORITY AND A BIG MAJORITY IN TWO UNEQUAL COMMUNITIES. THIS IS NOT COMPLICATED IF WE ARE GOING TO SOLVE THINGS BY PRINCIPLES OF EQUITY RATHER THAN STRENGTH."

TURKEY, WHICH IS GEOGRAPHICALLY MUCH CLOSER TO CYPRUS, ALSO RETAINS A 25,000-MAN OCCUPYING FORCE ON THE ISLAND.

STILL, OFFICIALS SAY THAT ANTI-AMERICAN FEELING HERE AMONG THE PUBLIC IS SPILLING OVER INTO ANTI-WESTERN FEELING, HELPED ALONG BY OPPOSITION POLITICIANS WHO ARE CLAIMING THAT GREECE NO LONGER HAS A PLACE IN THE WEST AND MUST FIND A MORE COMFORTABLE RELATIONSHIP IN THE SO-CALLED THIRD WORLD.

IF CONGRESS DOES LIFT THE EMBARGO AGAINST TURKEY, IT IS VIEWED AS UNLIKELY THAT THE GREEKS WOULD THEN SIGN AND SEND TO THEIR OWN PARLIAMENT THE SAME KIND OF LONG-STANDING U.S. ARMS AID PACKAGE AS THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION ENVISIONS FOR TURKEY.

IN THE PAST, IT WAS WIDELY ASSUMED THAT THE GREEKS WOULD NOT ACCEPT THE U.S. AID BECAUSE THAT WOULD CLEAR THE WAY IN CONGRESS FOR TURKISH AID.

NOW, OFFICIALS HERE SAY ANTI-U.S. FEELING AMONG THE PUBLIC
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WOULD NOT ALLOW THE ATHENS GOVERNMENT TO SUBMIT THE U.S. AID PACKAGE AND THAT PUBLIC PRESSURE MIGHT ACTUALLY DEMAND THE SHUTTING DOWN OF U.S. BASES HERE, WHICH, UNLIKE TURKEY, HAVE BEEN PERMITTED TO KEEP OPERATING. GREEK OFFICIALS, HOWEVER, SAY THEY ARE NOT PLANNING ANY SUCH SHUT-DOWN.

THE DOUBLE-BARRELED ACTION OF THE WHITE HOUSE BID TO LIFT THE EMBARGO AND THE TURKISH NEGOTIATING PROPOSALS HAS SUD- DENTLY THRUST GREECE INTO A DIPLOMATIC DILEMMA IN WHICH THE NEXT STEP SEEMS TO BE THEIRS.

IF THE GREEKS AGREE TO BEGIN DISCUSSIONS OVER THE TURKISH PROPOSALS, THAT IS SEEN HERE AS LIKELY TO AID IN THE LIFT- ING OF THE ARMS EMBARGO, SINCE IT WILL SUGGEST PROGRESS OVER CYPRUS. IF THE GREEKS CONTINUE TO REJECT TALKS, THEN ATHENS MIGHT BE MADE TO SEEM RECALCITRANT IN CONGRESS AND THAT, TOO, COULD AID IN LIFTING THE EMBARGO.

PRIVATELY, SOME TOP OFFICIALS HERE SUGGEST THAT GREECE WOULD GO ALONG WITH TURKISH CONTROL OF PERHAPS EVEN 24 TO

27 PERCENT OF THE LAND AREA, BUT TURKISH RETENTION OF ITS PRESENT 38 PERCENT, EQUAL TO DOUBLE ITS PROPORTION OF THE ISLAND'S POPULATION, IS OUT OF THE QUESTION.

SIMILARLY, SOME HERE SUGGEST THAT VARIOUS NEW SAFEGUARDS FOR THE TURKISH MINORITY WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE, PERHAPS EVEN A VETO POWER OVER EXTERNAL POLICIES THAT MIGHT OTHERWISE SWEEP A TURKISH MINORITY INTO ISLAND POLICIES AGAINST THEIR HOMELAND.

BUT THERE IS CLEAR OPPOSITION HERE TO A CONSTITUTION THAT UNCLASSIFIED

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WOULD PROVIDE THE TURKISH MINORITY, AS ONE SENIOR OFFICIAL PUT IT, "WITH RIGHTS ON EVERYTHING AND POLITICAL POWER SPLIT 50-50."

CONCESSIONS, SUCH AS THESE, HOWEVER, ARE VIEWED AS VERY IMPORTANT BECAUSE THEY MAKE IT CLEAR THAT GREECE ACKNOW- LEDGES THAT A SETTLEMENT CANNOT MEAN RETURN TO THE PRE- 1974 SITUATION. THUS THEY ARE VIEWED AS GREEK COMPROMISES AND SHOULD, IN ATHENS' VIEW, BE MET WITH MORE FORTHCOMING TURKISH PROPOSALS. END QUOTE. VANCE

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